

Aug. 20 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1998

Remarks in Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, on Military Action Against Terrorist Sites in Afghanistan and Sudan

August 20, 1998

Good afternoon. Today I ordered our Armed Forces to strike at terrorist-related facilities in Afghanistan and Sudan because of the threat they present to our national security.

I have said many times that terrorism is one of the greatest dangers we face in this new global era. We saw its twisted mentality at work last week in the Embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, which took the lives of innocent Americans and Africans and injured thousands more. Today we have struck back.

The United States launched an attack this morning on one of the most active terrorist bases in the world. It is located in Afghanistan and operated by groups affiliated with Usama bin Ladin, a network not sponsored by any state but as dangerous as any we face. We also struck a chemical weapons-related facility in Sudan. Our target was the terrorists' base of operation and infrastructure. Our objective was to damage their capacity to strike at Americans and other innocent people.

I ordered this action for four reasons: first, because we have convincing evidence these

groups played the key role in the Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania; second, because these groups have executed terrorist attacks against Americans in the past; third, because we have compelling information that they were planning additional terrorist attacks against our citizens and others with the inevitable collateral casualties we saw so tragically in Africa; and fourth, because they are seeking to acquire chemical weapons and other dangerous weapons.

Terrorists must have no doubt that, in the face of their threats, America will protect its citizens and will continue to lead the world's fight for peace, freedom, and security.

Now I am returning to Washington to be briefed by my national security team on the latest information. I will provide you with a more detailed statement later this afternoon from the White House.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:55 p.m. in the gymnasium at Edgartown Elementary School, prior to his departure for Washington, DC.

Address to the Nation on Military Action Against Terrorist Sites in Afghanistan and Sudan

August 20, 1998

Good afternoon. Today I ordered our Armed Forces to strike at terrorist-related facilities in Afghanistan and Sudan because of the imminent threat they presented to our national security.

I want to speak with you about the objective of this action and why it was necessary. Our target was terror; our mission was clear: to strike at the network of radical groups affiliated with and funded by Usama bin Ladin, perhaps the preeminent organizer and financier of international terrorism in the world today.

The groups associated with him come from diverse places but share a hatred for democracy, a fanatical glorification of violence, and a horrible distortion of their religion to justify the

murder of innocents. They have made the United States their adversary precisely because of what we stand for and what we stand against.

A few months ago, and again this week, bin Ladin publicly vowed to wage a terrorist war against America, saying, and I quote, "We do not differentiate between those dressed in military uniforms and civilians. They're all targets."

Their mission is murder and their history is bloody. In recent years, they killed American, Belgian, and Pakistani peacekeepers in Somalia. They plotted to assassinate the President of Egypt and the Pope. They planned to bomb six United States 747's over the Pacific. They

bombed the Egyptian Embassy in Pakistan. They gunned down German tourists in Egypt.

The most recent terrorist events are fresh in our memory. Two weeks ago, 12 Americans and nearly 300 Kenyans and Tanzanians lost their lives, and another 5,000 were wounded, when our Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam were bombed. There is convincing information from our intelligence community that the bin Ladin terrorist network was responsible for these bombings. Based on this information, we have high confidence that these bombings were planned, financed, and carried out by the organization bin Ladin leads.

America has battled terrorism for many years. Where possible, we've used law enforcement and diplomatic tools to wage the fight. The long arm of American law has reached out around the world and brought to trial those guilty of attacks in New York and Virginia and in the Pacific. We have quietly disrupted terrorist groups and foiled their plots. We have isolated countries that practice terrorism. We've worked to build an international coalition against terror. But there have been and will be times when law enforcement and diplomatic tools are simply not enough, when our very national security is challenged, and when we must take extraordinary steps to protect the safety of our citizens.

With compelling evidence that the bin Ladin network of terrorist groups was planning to mount further attacks against Americans and other freedom-loving people, I decided America must act. And so this morning, based on the unanimous recommendation of my national security team, I ordered our Armed Forces to take action to counter an immediate threat from the bin Ladin network.

Earlier today the United States carried out simultaneous strikes against terrorist facilities and infrastructure in Afghanistan. Our forces targeted one of the most active terrorist bases in the world. It contained key elements of the bin Ladin network's infrastructure and has served as a training camp for literally thousands of terrorists from around the globe. We have reason to believe that a gathering of key terrorist leaders was to take place there today, thus underscoring the urgency of our actions.

Our forces also attacked a factory in Sudan associated with the bin Ladin network. The factory was involved in the production of materials for chemical weapons.

The United States does not take this action lightly. Afghanistan and Sudan have been warned for years to stop harboring and supporting these terrorist groups. But countries that persistently host terrorists have no right to be safe havens.

Let me express my gratitude to our intelligence and law enforcement agencies for their hard, good work. And let me express my pride in our Armed Forces who carried out this mission while making every possible effort to minimize the loss of innocent life.

I want you to understand, I want the world to understand that our actions today were not aimed against Islam, the faith of hundreds of millions of good, peace-loving people all around the world, including the United States. No religion condones the murder of innocent men, women, and children. But our actions were aimed at fanatics and killers who wrap murder in the cloak of righteousness and in so doing profane the great religion in whose name they claim to act.

My fellow Americans, our battle against terrorism did not begin with the bombing of our Embassies in Africa, nor will it end with today's strike. It will require strength, courage, and endurance. We will not yield to this threat; we will meet it, no matter how long it may take. This will be a long, ongoing struggle between freedom and fanaticism, between the rule of law and terrorism. We must be prepared to do all that we can for as long as we must.

America is and will remain a target of terrorists precisely because we are leaders; because we act to advance peace, democracy, and basic human values; because we're the most open society on Earth; and because, as we have shown yet again, we take an uncompromising stand against terrorism.

But of this I am also sure: The risks from inaction, to America and the world, would be far greater than action, for that would embolden our enemies, leaving their ability and their willingness to strike us intact. In this case, we knew before our attack that these groups already had planned further actions against us and others.

I want to reiterate: The United States wants peace, not conflict. We want to lift lives around the world, not take them. We have worked for peace in Bosnia, in Northern Ireland, in Haiti, in the Middle East, and elsewhere. But in this day, no campaign for peace can succeed without a determination to fight terrorism.

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Let our actions today send this message loud and clear: There are no expendable American targets; there will be no sanctuary for terrorists; we will defend our people, our interests, and our values; we will help people of all faiths, in all parts of the world, who want to live free

of fear and violence. We will persist, and we will prevail.

Thank you. God bless you, and may God bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:32 p.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on the 1999 Federal Pay Raise

August 20, 1998

I am announcing today my support for a 3.6 percent pay raise in 1999 for Federal civilian employees and military personnel. This increase is consistent with preliminary appropriations and authorizing actions already taken in Congress. I urge the Congress to enact legislation providing for such an increase, and if Congress fails to act, I will use my executive authority to guarantee that a 3.6 increase takes effect.

An increase of 3.6 percent for Federal employees would essentially allow Federal pay to match the growth in private sector wages. Given the high level of productivity of Federal employees and the continuing trend of solid real income gains in the private sector, I believe that

Federal employees deserve the recognition and compensation that this increase provides. I will continue to work with Congress and labor to review the means by which we ensure fair and equitable pay.

Since the first days of this administration, the Vice President and I have worked to streamline the Federal Government. Today, the Government operates more efficiently and better serves the American people. This success would not have been possible without Government employees who have been called upon to work harder and to do more with less. Our Federal employees have risen to that mission, and with this action, we recognize their efforts.

Statement on the 1997 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse

August 21, 1998

Today's 1997 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse shows that while overall drug use remains flat, teen drug use continues to represent a serious and growing problem. That is why, last month, I launched a 5-year, \$2 billion youth antidrug media campaign to use the full force of the media to make sure that our children get the message that drugs are dangerous, wrong, and can kill you. That is also why I have asked Congress to pass a comprehensive drug strategy that aims to cut youth drug use in half through better prevention, more effective treatment, tougher law enforcement, and improved interdiction. And finally, that is a power-

ful reason why I have tried to do as much as possible to curb youth use of tobacco because, as today's survey also shows, teen smokers are about 12 times as likely to use illegal drugs as those who don't smoke.

But our efforts depend on all Americans—parents, teachers, coaches, and clergy—taking responsibility and talking to our children about the dangers of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. If we all take this first and important step, we can finally reverse this longstanding trend and help keep our Nation's children drug-free.